

# **CLOSING THE LOOP: USING ASSESSMENT RESULTS TO ENHANCE STUDENT LEARNING**

**NATASHA JANKOWSKI, NILOA**



# National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent



## NILOA

NILOA's mission is to discover and disseminate effective use of assessment data to strengthen undergraduate education and support institutions in their assessment efforts.

- SURVEYS ● WEB SCANS ● CASE STUDIES ● FOCUS GROUPS
- OCCASIONAL PAPERS ● WEBSITE ● RESOURCES ● NEWSLETTER ● PRESENTATIONS ● TRANSPARENCY FRAMEWORK ● FEATURED WEBSITES
- ACCREDITATION RESOURCES ● ASSESSMENT EVENT CALENDAR ● ASSESSMENT NEWS ● MEASURING QUALITY INVENTORY ● POLICY ANALYSIS ● ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN ● DEGREE QUALIFICATIONS PROFILE ● TUNING

[www.learningoutcomesassessment.org](http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org)



Welcome to NILOA



A recording of the May 17th webinar with Paul Gaston is now available.

- [Occasional Paper 17](#)
- [Occasional Paper 16](#)
- [NILOA Newsletter](#)
- [DQP Webinar](#)
- [National Survey](#)



## Valencia College

Valencia College's Institutional Assessment website is NILOA's Featured Website for its Creativity.

[Featured Website Archive](#)

NILOA Calendar

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## In the News | [Archive](#) [Join Our Email List](#)

**NILOA 2013 National Survey of Chief Academic Officers**  
 Fri, Jul 26, 2013 - 08:00 am

The 2013 national survey of Chief Academic Officers and institutional assessment practice is currently out in the field. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey if you have received an invitation. To see a copy of the survey, please click [here](#).

**Assessment: It's the Law**  
 Thu, Jul 25, 2013 - 08:00 am  
 Colleen Flaherty in Inside Higher Ed

Starting this fall, Iowa's three public universities will be required by state law to create formative and summative assessments and submit proposals for using assessment to improve student learning. Faculty members will be given flexibility in defining methods of measurement and learning outcomes that will best contribute to continuous improvement.

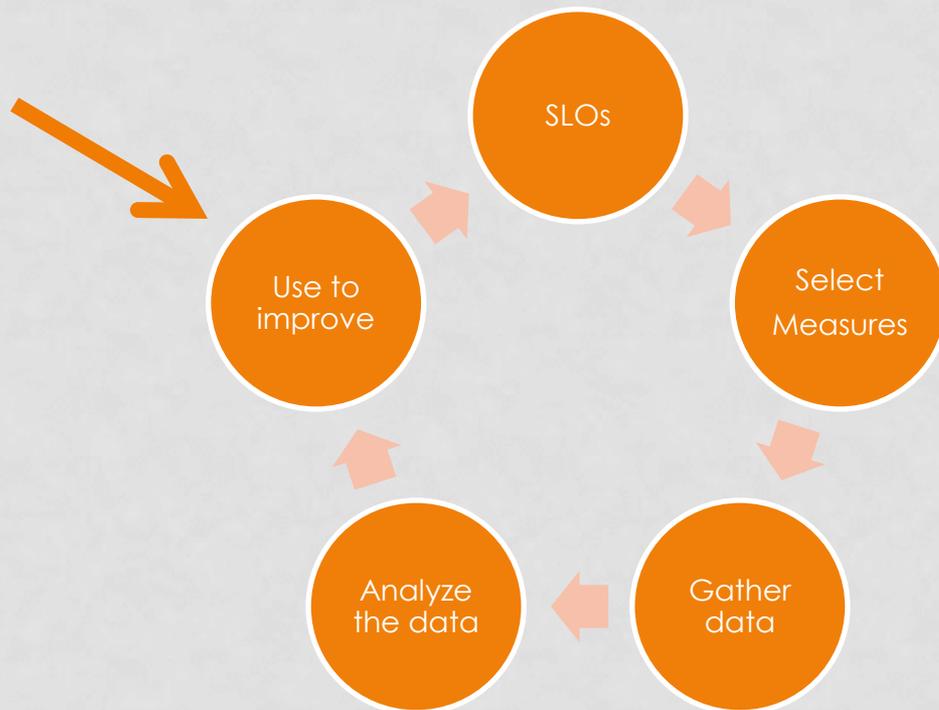
**Applying the Kolb Experiential Learning Model (ELM) to Distance Learning**  
 Wed, Jul 24, 2013 - 08:00 am  
 Eric T. Moore in Faculty Focus

# LET'S SHARE

- Do you have an example of when assessment results were used on your campus to enhance student learning that you would like to share?

# CLOSING THE LOOP

- Institutions have the greatest difficulty in the assessment cycle of “closing the loop” (Banta, 2009)



# WHY THE LACK OF USE?

- With the majority of institutions in the US engaged in assessing student learning, why is there still a large disparity of institutions that are using assessment results ?



# USING RESULTS

- Most assessment literature states that the reason or purpose of engaging with assessment in the first place is to USE the results to IMPROVE student learning (Banta, 2007; Ewell, 2010; Suskie, 2009; Walvoord, 2004)
- But what does that really mean?



# CAUSAL STATEMENTS

- The ability to make causal claims about our impact on students and their learning
- Institutional structures and support + student = enhanced learning



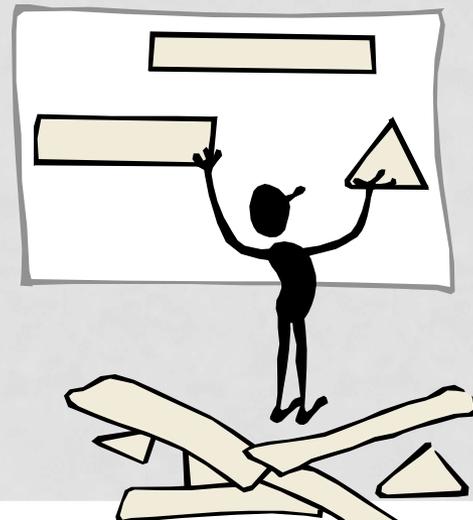
# DIFFICULTY OF CAUSAL STATEMENTS

- Mobility of students
- Untracked changes
- Changes in courses add up to program level change
- Levels at which use occurs
- Longer than a year cycle
- Loosely coupled relationships
- Life



# THEORIES OF CHANGE

- Why do we think the changes we make will lead to better outcomes?
- What is assumed in the changes we select as it relates to how students understand and navigate higher education?



# THEORY OF CHANGE (TOC)

- A process of outlining causal pathways by specifying what is needed for goals to be achieved (Carman, 2012)
- It requires articulating underlying assumptions which can be tested and measured (Jones, 2010)
- A Theory of Change provides a roadmap outlining how one thinks or conceptualizes getting from point A to point B over time (Ployhart & Vandenburg, 2010)



# FOR INSTANCE...

- Coverage and content
- Opportunities and support
- Intentional, coherent, aligned pathways
- Within each of these is the belief about a **root cause** – why students were not learning or not meeting the outcome and the mechanism by which the institution can help them succeed

# ROOT CAUSE

- A process of exploring not only that something happened, but why it happened the way that it did (Rooney & Heuvel, 2004)
- Moves beyond surface-level problem identification and examines assumptions in order to prevent reoccurrences (Taitz, Genn, Brooks, Ross, Ryan, Shumack, Burrell, & Kennedy, 2010)



# BUT...

Toulmin (2003)



- Warrants
- Arguments

# EVIDENCE-BASED STORYTELLING

Evidence of student learning is used  
in **support of claims or arguments**  
about **improvement and**  
**accountability** told through **stories**  
to **persuade a specific audience**

(Jankowski, 2012)

# EVIDENCE-BASED STORYTELLING

People attack the data as not relevant, not good enough, not reflective of their students? Tell them the story from the student experience perspective – or have students do it and help analyze the data

## The story of the lonely students



# DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

- Making sense of results – **Meaning Making**
- Multiple individuals across the institution critically engaging with assessment data
- Make sense of data to determine what, if anything, to do
  - 70%
  - Examine multiple data points
  - Group data by theme not method

# SHARING PRACTICE

**What does good assessment look like for us here?**

- Why do we think that what we are doing, for these students, will lead to enhanced learning, at this time?

# THE BRIAN BARTON STORY

A faculty chair in business examined the results of program outcomes for learners who completed the program capstone course and found that on one of the outcomes, learners were performing below what he regarded as the minimum threshold. Through the curriculum maps and alignments linking learning activities in individual courses to program outcomes in the capstone, he was able to identify across the entire program which courses had the strongest alignment to the outcome in question. From there, he was able to delve deeper into individual learning activities, to combine that information with additional data including course evaluations, and from the combined data to make detailed changes in specific courses and specific learning activities or assignments within courses. By the time participants in the revised courses and learning activities completed the capstone course, there was a measurable improvement in the particular outcome in question. The faculty chair involved in the process stated, “The concept of having an outcomes-based approach and having a strong theory of alignment all the way down to individual learning activities helps facilitate the use of assessment data.”

# VETERINARY TECHNOLOGY

Veterinary technology students did not score as well as needed in quantitative reasoning, for example, so veterinary technology faculty redesigned several key assignments to build and document that competency in students. Whereas previously students only read an article to learn about monitoring glucose levels in felines, the new assignment asked them to read the article, to take a reading of a cat's glucose level, and then to use both sources to write an analytical report. This curriculum redesign created a more robust and discipline-specific quantitative reasoning experience for students and a richer set of documents to be collected and examined through ePortfolio. Addressing general education requirements throughout the program, according to the veterinary technology program director, means that "programs need to decide where they are addressing general education within the curriculum," and using student artifacts collected through the ePortfolio "brings assessment to the forefront of the classroom."

# WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

The religion department wanted to know if their students were writing at a desired level, and so the faculty developed a writing rubric, gathered a random collection of student essays, and had a faculty panel rate them. A report was generated from the rating that outlined where students demonstrated or fell short on the outcomes in question. Areas where students fell short were used to refocus teaching and also to rethink the sequence of courses and assignments within courses so as to better reinforce the desired outcomes and help students improve. A faculty member involved in this effort remarked, "It seems so modest to state it now – we identified an intended learning outcome, made rubrics, looked at essays, and altered teaching – but that fairly modest process generated a holistic view of what students were doing well and what they were not doing so well, which allowed for minor adjustments. In a year or two these adjustments showed that students are doing better on a given outcome."

# ASSUMPTIONS

- How do we think about our students?
- Where do we think learning occurs?
- What is our theory of change?

# YOUR TURN

- What examples of using assessment results would you like to share from your institution?
- Where are you struggling?
- Where are you hopeful?

THANK YOU!



Website: <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/>

Email: [njankow2@illinois.edu](mailto:njankow2@illinois.edu)